The third stage—the next higher stage is of those who, following the Vedic Jnanakanda, Monism, qualified or unqualified based on knowledge and the Brahmavada founded on it with its *sadhana*—*nishkama* (disinterested) karma and pure *jnana* and *bhakti,* worship the Supreme Being in spirit and in truth, follow after their death the *devayana* path, the way of the gods, expounded by Raja Rishi Chitra in the Kaushitaki Upanishad and reach *Brahmaloka,* where they live for ever in conscious union with the Supreme Being and never return to earthly life. It is this stage that is believed in by Rishis Prajapati and Indra among others.

The great difference between the two paths is that while those who travel on the *devayana* do not return again to a new life on earth but reach in the end a true knowledge of the unconditioned Brahman, those who pass on to the world of the fathers on the *pitrayana,* return to the earth to be born again and again.

According to the advocates of Unqualified Monism, propounded by the Rishis Uddalaka Aruni and Yagnavalkva among others and followed by the Sankarite School, as already seen in Chapter VIII, the aforesaid

third stage is
not the final destiny of man but there is a
fourth stage, the
stage of absolute identity with and
absorption in the un-
conditioned Brahman for those who attain
complete libera-
tion in this life or in the *Brahmaloka.*
Ramanuja's School of Qualified Monism
accepts Chitra's
teaching of the third stage as the final
destiny of man, as
the Rajarishi speaks of no higher goal.
According to him,
absorption in Brahman would be, if it were
at all possible,
not the liberation but the utter destruction
of the soul.
The highest state a finite self can attain to,
is a state of
absolute holiness and entire likeness to the
divine nature
and a clear realisation of its dependence
on the Infinite.
The followers of Sankara assert that the
Brahmaloka
spoken of by Raja Rishi Chitra must be
interpreted as the